

# Welcome to Dragon Training

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Summary: I was supposed to be the one at the top of the class. Now I was being outdone by the miracle-boy, Hiccup. HTTYD from Astrid's POV; companion to "Of Vikings and Dragons." R&R please, final chapter eight up!

## 1. Chapter 1

**\*\*A/N:** So, I couldn't take the suspense, and I had nothing better to do, so here you are! The movie from Astrid's POV! (Warning: I am strictly canon, every quote is straight from the movie unless the scene wasn't even in the movie. If you don't care, read your little heart out and please review!)\*\*

The fires of many burning houses heated my face and inflamed my anger. I tossed another bucket of water on one of the conflagrations, extinguishing it with a hiss. There were just too many for our small team of five. There was me; Snotface Snotlout, the most arrogant adolescent on Berk and the least desirable; the twins, Ruffnut and Tuffnut, who never stopped squabbling with each other; and Fishlegs, the dragon nerd. None of us were above fifteen.

Oh yeah, and there was that scrawny Hiccup. He had a freckled face, brown hair, and the sorriest build in the history of Vikings. Gobber had apprenticed him in blacksmith work ever since he had been eight. Hiccup could hardly handle an ax or a sword, let alone a shield. His father, Stoick the Vast and Chief of the Tribe, kept him inside as much as he could, because Hiccup was a lodestone for disaster. Just last month, he had knocked a cart of food over a cliff by tripping. As a result, we had all gone hungry for a few weeks after. It was ironic that he should be the son of a Chief, because he was not cut out to lead. You could ask anyone on Berk; they would agree wholeheartedly.

A fireball exploded behind me, probably Gronckle. I turned and ran back to the tank to get more water, having used my last bit. The rest

of the gang followed behind. I spotted Hiccup, as gangly and awkward as a newborn duckling, hanging out of the doors of the forge, watching me. I felt a spark of smug pride inside of me. But no affection. Not from me. I don't fall over swooning as easily as most girls.

Dragons swooped and soared overhead as I refilled. Ruffnut and Tuffnut were right behind me, fighting over the better bucket. As soon as I stepped out of line and began racing towards another smoking building, a piercing screech filled the air. Dread welled up inside me.

"Night Fury!" the cry came. I had ducked and rolled under the steps of a luckily unburned house even before the second alarm, "Get down!" had been sounded. From underneath my hiding place, I watched as an indistinct black shape plummeted from the sky. The shriek was replaced by an explosion as one of our catapults blew apart in flames. Vikings leaped down from the debris, and the shape wheeled over the resulting fire left from the wreckage. It banked, and tore apart another of our towers with a ball of violet fire

Night Furies are the fastest, most dangerous dragon of them all. It does the most damage when compared with the others, it only attacks at night. It doesn't steal food like the others, either. It only causes destruction wherever it strikes. We don't even have the knowledge to defeat it. We can't see it, it's devastatingly fast, and destroys our catapults until we have none. I silently cursed the elusive dragon, vowing to kill it one day and use its teeth for daggers.

Gobber's mismatched legs ran across my ground-level view. He had never told us exactly how he lost his hand and his foot, but we could always guess. I pulled myself out from under the stairs, wishing I could help fight alongside the older Vikings, but I was too young. \_Soon, \_I told myself. \_Soon I'll turn eighteen, and then I will officially be an adult. \_Four years was still a long time to wait, though, for someone as impatient as me. The Night Fury had apparently gone, and I grabbed my wooden bucket, eager to get back in the firefight. A loud crash sounded from my right, and I whirled around just in time to see one of our enormous torches go toppling into the harbor, crushing two ships and destroying the platforms that helped us to climb down. And at the foot of the charred stump, just behind Stoick, wasâ€¦Hiccup.

I watched as the last of the dragons escaped with most of our flocks. \_Idiot!\_ I roared at Hiccup. Torches took two months to build and raise, ships even longer. Gobber must have taken his eye off of Hiccup for a second too long.

As everyone stared accusingly at Hiccup, he gulped, pointed somewhere behind him, and said, "OK, but I hit a Night Fury."

I snorted. \_Yeah, right.\_

Stoick began to pull Hiccup away from the crowd. "It's not like the last few times, Dad! I really, actually hit it! You guys were busy, and I had a very clear shot! It went down just off Raven Point, let's get a search party out there before itâ€¦"

"STOP!" Stoick roared. He closed his eyes and sighed. "Justâ€¦stop."

Every time you step outside, disaster falls. Can you not see that I have bigger problems? Winter is almost here, and I have an entire village to feed!"

Hiccup bounced on the balls of his feet nervously. "Well, between you and me, the village could do with a little \_less\_ feeding, know what I mean?"

I shook my head. He just didn't get it.

"This isn't a joke!" He sighed. "Why can't you follow the simplest orders?"

"I can't stop myself! I see a dragon and I have to just \_kill\_ it, you know? It's who I am, Dad."

Stoick put his head in his hands. "Many things, Hiccup. But a dragon killer is not one of them."

He straightened, glowering down at Hiccup. "Get back to the house." Looking over his son's head, he said loudly to Gobber, "Make sure he gets there! I have his mess to clean up." Gobber came up behind Hiccup and swatted him on the back of his shaggy brown head before they set off together, back to the house of the Chief.

\* \* \*

><p>I crouched at the side of the huge wooden doors that never closed right, listening to the angry mutters of the crowd inside the main hall. If my mother was here, she would have given me a good scolding: "Eavesdropping is unbecoming, you should know better," blah, blah, blah. But she wasn't, and I don't. She was off on some exploration of the surrounding land, and I didn't have a father anymore. I was free to do as I pleased. So there.<p>

I tensed as the loud, deep voice of Stoick rang in the stone hall. "Either we finish them, or they'll finish us! It's the only way we'll be rid of them. If we find the nest and destroy it, they'll leave. They'll find another home." I heard the thunk of a dagger embedding itself in wood. "One more search, before the ice sets in."

Another chorus of grumbles. "Those ships never come back," someone said.

"We're Vikings. It's an occupational hazard!" I grinned. Boy, was that ever true. "Now, who's with me?"

There were no takers. "All right," Stoick said, obviously with a plan in mind. "Those who stay will look after Hiccup."

Everyone shouted "To the ships!" and "I'm with you, Stoick!" After that, I heard the throng moving to the doors, and I ran out of the way so I would not get caught listening in on a Tribe meeting. Taking the longest, most indirect route I could, I headed to the kill ring, where my first Dragon Training would take place tomorrow.

Snotlout was already there, as were the twins. Fishlegs was nowhere to be found. I ignored them as I passed, and peered through the bars of the ring, looking at the stone floor and the trembling, iron-plated doors that held one of each type of dragon. All but the

Night Fury, of course. There was an empty cage for that. The ring disappeared before my eyes as I imagined conquering each dragon, ahead of the class. And to be the first to kill one! It was all planned out for me. The others didn't stand a chance.

\*\*There you have it. Like it? Love it? Hate it? Please tell me below, I live on reviews! (Plus, it's the only way I'll keep the story going:) Thanks for reading!\*\*

## 2. Chapter 2

\*\*A/N: To the wishes of all (hopefully), here's the next one. This is my favorite one; it explores Astrid's thoughts at a more in-depth level. Hope you like it!\*\*

"Welcome to Dragon Training!"

The door to the ring creaked upwards and stopped with a metallic clunk. I inhaled slowly. "No turning back," I said under my breath. Not that I would. I took my first steps into the kill ring, drinking in the sight of weapons lining the walls and stopped in the middle of the floor. The silver, cloudy sky, full of rain, painted everything dull gray. The smell of just-fallen rain tinged the air, and the ground was dark with moisture. I hoisted my double-sided ax over my shoulder. This would be easy. A web of chains covered the ring to prevent the dragons from flying away. It was like catching fish in a bucket.

"I hope I get some serious burns," Tuffnut said from behind me.

"I'm hoping for some mauling," Ruffnut agreed. "Like, on my shoulder or lower back."

"Yeah," I said, sighing, "it's only fun if you get a scar out of it."

"No kidding, right?" a voice said from behind all of us. We glanced over our shoulders to see Hiccup himself, looking miserable and carrying an ax. "Pain. Love it."

"Awww, great, who let him in?" Tuffnut groaned. My thoughts exactly. Had his father actually agreed to putting him in Dragon Training?

"Let's get started!" Gobber said, shutting the grate behind him as he entered the ring. "The recruit who does best will win the honor of killing his first dragon in front of the entire village." He emphasized his words by twisting his hook-hand in the air in front of him.

"Hiccup already killed a Night Fury, so does that disqualify him, or?" Snotlout said mockingly. The teens behind him burst into laughter. Even I smiled a bit. There was no way gawky Hiccup could have caught and killed a Night Fury. Hiccup looked uncomfortable, probably reminiscing his failed attempt to impress us. Snotlout gave a sharklike grin before turning away to joke with the others. "Can I transfer to the class with the cool Vikings?" I too faced the dragons' cages, eager for class to be over already.

"Now," Gobber said, walking in front of us and the line we had formed, "behind these doors are a few of the many species you will learn to fight. The Deadly Nadderâ€"

"Speed eight, armor sixteen," Fishlegs muttered. Oh, great. Here we go.

"â€"the Hideous Zipplebackâ€"

"Plus eleven stealth times two."

"â€"the Monstrous Nightmareâ€"

"Firepower fifteen."

"â€"the Terrible Terrorâ€"

"Attack eight, venom twelve!"

"Can you stop that!" Gobber said, irritated. "And,"â€"he put his good hand on the lever of the last cageâ€"the Gronckle."

"Wait!" Snotlout stepped forward, panicking. "Aren't you going to teach us first?"

"I believe," Gobber said with a twinkle in his eye, "in learning on the job."

He brought the lever down.

The door burst open, and an enormous Gronckle leaped into the air, wings buzzing. A muddy brown, it was covered in warts and had several sharp teeth jutting up from its jaw. The group scattered, trying not to look like lunch. "Today is about survival," Gobber said. "If you get blasted, you're dead." The dragon slammed into the wall opposite his cage, sending shields flying, and began scooping rocks into its mouth.

"Quick, what's the first thing you're going to need?" Gobber shouted over the ruckus.

"A doctor?" Hiccup yelled. He would.

"Plus five speed?" Fishlegs tried.

"A shield," I said, after the dimwits had finished guessing.

"Shields!" Gobber said. "Go!"

I dove for the nearest shield and scooped it up. Around me, everyone else did the same.

"The most important piece of equipment is your shield!" Gobber instructed. "If you must make a choice between a sword or a shield, take the shield!" He hoisted the shield that Hiccup was struggling with onto his arm, and pushed him out into the battle. I watched in a ready crouch as the Gronckle closed in on the twins, who were arguing over a shield both of them had grabbed at the same time.

"Get your hands off my shield!"

"There's like a million shields!" Ruffnut protested.

"Take that one. It has a flower on it. Girls like flowers."

Ruffnut, a tomboy at heart, hit Tuffnut viciously over the head with the shield they had grabbed. "Oops!" she said, grinning. "Now this one has blood on it!"

The Gronckle blasted a ball of solid fire at them; it hit the shield and sent both of them sprawling.

"Ruffnut! Tuffnut! You're out!" Gobber yelled, like it was some sort of game. "Those shields are good for another thing!" he added, as the Gronckle turned on the rest of us. "Noise! Make lots of it, to throw off a dragon's aim."

Made sense. I began banging my ax on my shield, creating a loud crashing noise that the others quickly replicated. The Gronckle shook its head, stunned by the barrage of sound. We surrounded the beast, never staying in one place. It watched Fishlegs with particular interest, following him with its round, bulging eyes. \_At least it's not me, \_I thought.

Gobber continued to teach us from the side of the ring. "All dragons have a limited number of shots! How many does a Gronckle have?"

"Five?" Snotlout guessed.

"No, six!" Fishlegs said, raising his shield in the air. The Gronckle turned and opened its mouth, decided on its target.

"Correct! Six! That's one for each of you!" The shield was blasted out of his hand. Fishlegs screeched and ran away as fast as his legs could carry him. "Fishlegs. Out."

Hiccup was cowering behind a wooden flat on the side of the ring. He tried to come out when Gobber yelled, "Hiccup! Get in there!" but before he could pull his shield out, a fireball from the Gronckle hit the wall next to him, leaving a sizzling hole. He yelped and ducked back behind the wall.

I leaped out of the way of Fishlegs' smoking shield; it crashed into the place where I had been moments before. I ended up next to Snotlout, who said, "So, anyway, I moved into my parents' basement? You know, you should come by some time to work out! You look like you work out!" I leaped to the side just before another of the Gronckle's fire attacks hit Snotlout's shield. "Snotlout! You're done!"

I rolled and stood next to Hiccup, who had made the extraordinary move of coming out of hiding. "So, I guess it's just you and me now, huh?"

\_Why is everyone trying to talk to me today! \_The Gronckle whirled with fire in its eyes. "Nope, just you," I muttered, dashing to the side as the Gronckle's mouth heated up with another attack. The fireball knocked Hiccup's shield out of his hand. It rolled on its side, and Hiccup desperately chased after it.

"One shot left!"

The shield rolled out of Hiccup's reach. He was being driven by the Gronckle towards a bit of rock he would not be able to escape.

"Hiccup!" Gobber shouted, looking frantic.

The Gronckle's nostrils flared. Opening his enormous jaws one last time, his maw glowed with fire. Hiccup covered his head and smashed himself against the wall.

\_Boooom!\_

Gobber had saved him. His hook was stuck around the Gronckle's mouth, which pointed just above Hiccup's head. A circle of charred, red-hot rock two feet across marked the place where the fireball had missed Hiccup. He was lucky to be alive.

"That'sâ€"six," Gobber grunted, yanking the Gronckle away from the cowering boy. "Go back to bed, ya overgrown sausage! You'll get another chance, don't you worry." That didn't sound very promising.

Gobber pulled Hiccup to his feet once the Gronckle was back under lock and key. "Remember," he said ominously. "A dragon will alwaysâ€"always\_â€"go for the kill."

\* \* \*

><p>It rained heavily that night. Sheets of it pounded the roof as we ate a meager dinner. Thunder grumbled outside, and lighting flashed almost constantly. Each flash drew my eyes to the doors, and every roar sounded like a dragon, even though it was impossible to fly in this weather. I swept my damp hair over my shoulder as I drained the last of my drink.<p>

The doors banged open and shut as Hiccup entered the hall, drenched from head to toe. I hadn't seen him all day, and I vaguely wondered where he had been.

"Where did Astrid go wrong?" I snapped my attention back to the conversation. We were discussing the mistakes we made today, and how we could fix them in the future.

"I mistimed my somersault dive," I said. "It was sloppy; it threw off my reverse tumble." I wouldn't get it wrong the next time. I would make sure of that.

"Yeah," Ruffnut said, "we noticed."

I threw a glare in her direction, but she had already turned to jeer at Hiccup with the others.

"No, no," Snotlout protested. "It was totally Astrid."

I put my head in my hands and sighed. Did anyone around here realize that I was serious? That less than perfect just wasn't good enough? Gobber backed me up by saying, "She's right. You have to be tough on

yourself. Where did Hiccup go wrong?"

"Uh, he showed up," Ruffnut snickered.

"He didn't get eaten," Tuffnut added.

"He's never where he should be," I growled, glaring at him. He sat at the other table across from us, hunched over his food.

"\_Thank \_you, Astrid," Gobber said, coming around the table. "You need to live and breathe this stuff." He swept aside the empty plates and cups on the surface of the table with a scrape and plopped a book down in their place.

"The Dragon Manual," he announced. "Everything we know about every dragon we know of." Another growl of thunder cut off his next words, and he squinted at the ceiling. "No attacks tonight. Hurry up."

Tuffnut sat up straight, the dagger he had been balancing on the tip falling over. "Wait, you mean read?"

"While we're still alive?" Ruffnut croaked, looking surprised.

Snotlout banged his fist on the table. "Why read words when you can just kill the stuff the words tell you stuff about?"

I rolled my eyes. Not the most poetic of ways to put it, but I agreed with him. I had already combed the Dragon Manual through for any weaknesses.

"Oh, I've read it, like, seven times!" Fishlegs said quickly. "There's this water dragon that sprays \_boiling \_water at your face! And then there's this other one thatâ€"

"Yeah," Tuffnut said, cutting him off, "sounds interesting. If there was a chance I was gonna read that..."

"â€|but, now," Ruffnut said, looking bored.

Snotlout got up from the table and headed for the doors. "You guys read," he said over his shoulder, "I'll go kill stuff." This raised a storm of protests as the rest of us followed, leaving me and Hiccup by ourselves.

"So," Hiccup said, attempting to make conversation. "I guess we'll share?"

"Read it," I said abruptly, pushing the book towards him. I got up and left, shaking my head.

"Oh, all mine then," Hiccup spoke from behind me. "Wow. OK then, I'll see youâ€"

The vast doors shut behind me, drowning out his last words. I ran through the rain as fast as I could in order to avoid getting drenched. Not very many good things came out of being one of two female teenagers on Berk. The problem was, I didn't want to be the mother of the household, always staying home and watching the kids. I



wanted to get out there. I wanted to make something of myself, avenge years of thievery and destruction. And I didn't want some Viking wanna-be distracting me.

**\*\*So, thanks for reading! \*cough REVIEW cough cough PLEASE cough\*\***

### 3. Chapter 3

**\*\*A/N: OK, want to hear a funny story? I had been working on this story already, and I was perusing FfN when I came upon a story called "Our Parents' War" by ichtyosaurus. It displayed the scene below in the most amazing way, and now I feel like a total fail. :/But here it is, and I hope you'll give me your thoughts on it! (BTW, thanks for making those points, systemman. You should review everyone's stories!)\*\***

I almost considered skipping class that day. The rain had made it extremely cold and wet. Not the best climate to fight dragons in. But I decided to go anyways.

The kill ring had been entirely transformed into some sort of maze. Wooden walls, at least ten feet high, blocked my view of the other side, and I wondered how long Gobber had been up last night. We stood uncertainly for a moment, peering at our now unfamiliar surroundings. What dragon would we face this time? I glanced sideways at the others, wondering what they were thinking. I noticed that Hiccup looked like he hadn't gotten any sleep at all last night. But that didn't stop him from being full of excited energy.

"All right!" Gobber spoke from behind, making us jump. "I've got a real treat for you today." What it was, he didn't explain. Instead, he ordered for us to spread out in the seemingly random arrangement of walls. I took a stance at a three way intersection, not a place I could get cornered. Unlike others such as Hiccup, who had stood on front of a wide section of plain wall. He stood directly beneath Gobber, who was standing where he could watch all of us fight. Which brought me back to my present concern: what was I fighting? Nothing too big; we weren't prepared for anything bigger than a Nadder. Which left the Nadder itself, another Gronckle, or a Terrible Terror.

The door to one of the cages creaked open. I tensed, listening as hard as I could. A few drops of rain pattered on my arms.

As hard as I tried to do otherwise, I saw it before I heard it: a large blue dragon, with a frill of spikes and colorful markings on its wings, which were half-furled against its sides. It had blistering orange eyes and a curved nose horn. A Deadly Nadder.

Quick as I could, I ducked behind a wall to remain unseen. Nadders moved fast, much like a bird. A six-foot bird with teeth and fire. I heard a shower of sparks hit wood somewhere off to my right. "Focus, Hiccup!" Gobber yelled. "You're not even trying!" Trying to do what? Stay alive, or kill the Nadder? Probably both.

"Today is all about attack!" Gobber said. "Nadders are quick and light on their feet. Your job is to be quicker and lighter." Quick and light. I could do that. A shadow loomed over the enclosure as the

Nadder leaped up onto the top of the maze, squawking. It whipped its tail through the air, and Fishlegs shouted with alarm and fright as the Nadder sprayed foot-long spikes from its tail. Amateurs. With Nadders, it was better to expect the unexpected.

"Look for its blind spot," Gobber called. "Every dragon has one. Find it, hide in it, and strike."

I poked my head around the corner, watching the Nadder confront the twins, who, luckily, were standing in the monster's blind spot, a place directly in front of its nose, if you could believe it. They had found it, and they were hiding in it, but they weren't striking. No, Ruffnut and Tuffnut were fighting again. They yelled loudly enough for the dragon to judge their position, and the Nadder opened its mouth and blasted a column of fire at the twins. Ruffnut yanked her brother out of the way, and they ran out of view as the Nadder looked around for another victim to toast.

"Blind spot, yes," Gobber chuckled. "Deaf spotâ€"eh, not so much."

I crouched, ready as it swung its ugly head back and forth. Snotlout came jogging up the corridor I was in, and he ducked behind his shield as well. I heard Hiccup, yammering to Gobber about Night Furies, coming closer and closer. The Nadder perked upwards, alert and wary.

I glanced behind me, seeing Hiccup come into view. "Hiccup!" I hissed as loud as I dared. "Get down!" Didn't he know a thing about fighting dragons? I watched the Nadder make its steady progress down the aisle we hid in. It paused, cocking its hidden ears. I took the chance to roll across the exposed ground in front of me. I heard Snotlout do the same, and Hiccup as well, but of course he didn't make it. He ended up flat on his back, and with an angry screech, the Nadder charged after him. Hiccup scrambled after us. \_No! The other way, the other way!\_ I darted down a path Hiccup couldn't follow, and ended up face-to-face with the Nadder again.

Just as I raised my ax, Snotlout pushed me aside. "Watch out, babe, I'll take care of this." He then threw his club at the Nadder, missing it by a good three feet. The Nadder chuckled at his pathetic attempt.

I glared at him, and he whined, "The sun was in my eyes, Astrid!" like it was the most obvious thing, especially when the sky was covered in dark gray clouds. I darted away as the Nadder charged again, thinking, \_Keep moving, keep moving!\_ The Nadder pursued me and Snotlout as it slammed into walls, knocking them down and creating clouds of dust and debris. It was right on my tail; Snotlout had ran off somewhere else, and it was just me. I leaped up onto the top of a wall, holding on by my fingers, and heaved myself up and over. Hiccup was standing with his back to me, \_still\_ asking Gobber about Night Furies. He turned as I yelled at him, and amid a cloud of dirt, I fell on top of him as the Nadder knocked over the wall I had been precariously balancing on. There was a loud thud as my ax embedded itself in his shield. When the dust cleared, Tuffnut jeered, "Oooh, love on the battlefield!"

"She could do better," Ruffnut giggled.

With an angry wrench, I pulled myself off of Hiccup and looked around

for the Nadder. It threw a wall off of itself with a crash of wood. I gasped, and seized the ax stuck in Hiccup's shield. It would not come out.

The Nadder was coming closer. I yelled, and pulled the whole shield off of Hiccup's arm by bracing myself with a foot against Hiccup's face. Just as the Nadder pounced, I swung the shield at its face. The shield exploded in shards; the Nadder stumbled off, shaking its head. I stood there, just as stunned as the dragon. I had a chance to kill a dragon \_and I missed it. \_All because of Hiccup.

I whirled around, furious. Hiccup was on the ground, with his arms over his head. "Is this some kind of a joke to you?" I snapped, feeling every word fall with the force of a war hammer. "Our parents' war is about to become ours. Figure out which side you're on."

\* \* \*

><p>I didn't see Hiccup for the rest of the day, which was good. I didn't want to see his face again for a long time. Though, after a while, I did feel a little bit sorry for yelling at him. But he deserved it. He just needed to wake up and face the reality of what we were doing. I shook my head in disgust as I ascended the spiral platform that led up to the tower where we ate. Sometimes Hiccup treated dragons like they were his best pals or something. I saw him cringe a bit when we talked about the most efficient way to gut a Gronckle, or how best to take down a Monstrous Nightmare. Hiccup really needed to grow a backbone if he was to be a Viking.<p>

Tonight, dinner was a few whole chickens that we had cooked up from our meager stock. A few of us had some leftover fish, though, because the chicken was tough and tasteless. And fish was just healthier than the chicken. Gobber was in the middle of telling the story of how he lost his missing limbs.

"â€|he was enormous, had to have been twenty feet. And a very unusual color; gold, if memory serves." I sat down at the end of the semi-circle, taking a fish as I went. "It was a nasty battle, one in which he lost a leg." Gobber chuckled. "Oh-ho-ho, but when I took it, he was furious, he was. He darted forward, faster than I could blink, and with one twist, he bit off my hand and swallowed it whole!"

The teens around the fire broke out in a chorus of "Whoa!"s.

Gobber continued. "I could see the look in his face. I was delicious. He must have spread the word, because it wasn't a month before another one of them took my leg." He held out his stump of a foot, with a wooden peg-leg attached to it by rope.

"Isn't it weird to think that your hand was inside a dragon?" Fishlegs said excitedly. "Like if your mind was still in control of it? You could have killed him from the inside, by, like, crushing his heart or something."

Yep, that was Fishlegs. Always thinking about the impossible.

Snotlout growled. "I swear, I'm so angry right now! I'll avenge your beautiful hand and your beautiful foot. I'll chop off the legs of

every dragon I fight." He shook the chicken leg he had on a stick.  
"With my face."

Gobber held up a finger, swallowing a mouthful of meat he had finished with. "No, no it's the wings and the tails you want. If it can't fly, it can't get away. A downed dragon is a dead dragon."

Hiccup sat up a little straighter at Gobber's words. It was impossible to read his expression, a first for me. Was it concern? Surprise? I couldn't tell.

I looked away from Hiccup as Gobber stood up and yawned. "I'm off to bed," he said in his rough brogue. "You should be, too. Tomorrow, we get to the big boys, slowly but surely making our way up to the Monstrous Nightmare." Everyone got tense and excited then, eyes bright with firelight, leaning forward in their seats. "But who will have the honor of killing it?"

Tuffnut leaned back in his seat. "It's gonna be me. It's my destiny. See?"

My eyes wandered over to Hiccup again, and I was surprised to see that he was gone, the fish-on-a-stick he had cooked rocking on his log, steaming in the cool air. I heard footsteps on the boards leading downwards. Moving over to the edge, I saw him clomping down the steps, disappearing into the dark. I hesitated, then returned to the fire, deciding it wasn't worth it to follow him. I had given up on deciphering his weird ways.

\*\*Thank you for taking the time to read this! I love seeing all of the numbers on my traffic stats! Help me help you by reviewing!\*\*

#### 4. Chapter 4

\*\*A/N: This is another one of my favorite chapters, and the first time it deviates from the movie-implied. Have fun!\*\*

I lay awake in bed that night, cursing whoever was banging around outside. It sounded like it was coming from Gobber's forge. What sort of project was he working on now?

I could bear it no longer. Rising from my thin covers, I pulled my boots over my cold toes, my fingers fumbling. I didn't bother grabbing my ax and looking like a mad murderer come in the middle of the night. I just needed to see who was making that racket.

The village was silent and still. I met no one while I crept through the houses, following the metal bangs. The forge was alight with candles and the occasional torch. But it wasn't Gobber that worked at the anvil. It was Hiccup.

I watched in fascination as he worked at a long rod of metal with a small hammer. He shaped the rod until it was round and smooth, with a bulb at the end of it. The rod went into a vat of some sort of liquid which cooled the glowing metal. I had no idea he was so good with his hands. I looked behind him at the various drawings on the wall of the forge. Most were for some catapult-thing he had invented. The others

were a depiction of some sort of fin. Was he making a flying machine? It looked almost like a dragon's tail. Butâ€|no, no, he wasn't that crazy.

Hiccup pulled an old shield off the wall and pried a few iron nails out of the wood. He heated and shaped those as well, tapping them lightly until the form pleased him. I had no clue what he was doing, but it was intriguing to watch as the fin took shape in his hands. Hiccup's brow was wrinkled in concentration, and his hands moved swiftly. He occasionally glanced over his shoulder, as though worried he would get caught if he wasn't careful. But he didn't know that I was watching.

Finally, his creation was finished. Hiccup held the fin out in front of him, looking satisfied. With a snap, he closed it and hid it under his desk and out of sight. I scrambled into the shadows as he walked out of the forge, looking both exhausted and excited. He took the narrow alley between two houses and disappeared.

I pondered the strange behavior of Hiccup as I too headed for home. What on earth was he making? If he kept this up, he would be too drained to be of any use in Dragon Training. What could be so important that he would give that up? I would have to get to the bottom of this.

The rest of the night was uneventful, and I got a decent night's sleep. The next day was gray once again. For once, I wished it would be sunny. My frozen fingers couldn't take much more of this. Because of the weather, we decided to have our lesson in the afternoon. By then, the sun had warmed the ground and the air, and it was actually a little bit hot, which was nice on the island of Berk.

The walls were gone, which was a relief, because I had not been able to figure out where I was last time. It was maddening. I eyed Hiccup, who showed no sign of over-exhaustion. There were several buckets of water at the gate when we entered. It was very cryptic, and I picked one up, my eyes darting around suspiciously. Gobber was having a good old time with these lessons of his. He walked through the gate, grinning like his usual self. He began to separate us into pairs: me and Ruffnut; Hiccup and Fishlegs; Tuffnut and Snotlout. None of us was particularly happy with the results, but Gobber was firm in his decisions. Did he think we would suddenly make friends with each other?

"Today is all about teamwork!"

The doors burst open with an explosion of foul green gas. I held back my disgustâ€"and my breathâ€"and looked around me for its source. I knew exactly what this was.

"Now," Gobber began, "a wet dragon head can't light its fire. The Hideous Zippleback is \_extra\_ tricky. One head breathes gas, the other head lights it. Your job is to know which is which."

The gas was thick enough that soon we could no longer see Gobber or any of the other pairs. Back to back, Ruffnut and I watched the swirling fog cautiously for any sign of movement. I held my bucket ready, half-tilted forward should any ugly head make itself visible through the cloud of gas.

Suddenly, a splash of water flew at us, and Snotlout shouted, "There!"

Ruffnut growled, "Hey! It's us, idiot!"

Tuffnut giggled. "Sorry. Your butts are getting bigger. We thought you were a dragon."

"Not that there's anything wrong," Snotlout tried, "with a dragonesque figureâ€"

I stormed forwards and swung at Snotlout, hitting him on the jaw. Sometimes I just can't help myself. Ruffnut's bucket went flying past me and smacked Tuffnut. He collapsed on the ground, dazed. Suddenly, he whooshed backwards, dragged off by some unseen force. Ruffnut stepped forwards to help, and I held out an arm. A long, whiplike tail with irregular fins swept under me, knocking my feet out and leaving me on the ground, the bucket empty of water. \_Drat! \_Tuffnut leaped out of the gas, howling, "I'm hurt! I am very much hurt!"

Hiccup and Fishlegs stood a few feet away, frozen. A Zippleback head snaked out of the mist, sniffing with flared nostrils and narrowing its amber eyes. It wasn't pretty; the Zippleback had bulging eyes and a misshapen mouth full of protruding teeth. The length of his neck was an acidic green. It moved over to Fishlegs, who panicked, yelped, and tossed the contents of the bucket onto the dragon's head.

Angry, the Zippleback snarled, wisps of green smoke curling out of his mouth. "Oops," Fishlegs groaned. "Wrong head." The dragon promptly sprayed a fountain of gas at Fishlegs, who screeched and ran in the opposite direction. Satisfied, the Zippleback faced Hiccup, pulling its other head out from the fog. This head sparked and crackled at the mouth.

"Now, Hiccup!" Gobber yelled, and Hiccup tossed the water as high as it would go. It splashed in a puddle around him, completely missing the Zippleback.

\_You idiot, \_I growled in my head as I stood up, wishing my water bucket was full.

The two-headed dragon glared contemptuously at the human before him, probably wondering whether he was worth eating. The right head snapped at him, jaws zapping, and Hiccup fell backwards. Gobber leaped forwards, but before he could do anything, Hiccup stood up. And the Zippleback \_backed away from him!\_

It was unlike anything I had ever seen. Had the laws of nature been completely reversed? The Zippleback could have used Hiccup as a toothpick, and yet it was actually listening to him? Holding out his arms, Hiccup said loudly, "Back! Back! Yes, that's right, back into your cage." He then lingered for a moment at the gate, doing something with his hands, then shut the doors as the Zippleback cowered in a corner.

Hiccup turned, wiping his hands on his fur vest, and saw all of us staring at him in incredulous disbelief. He looked uncomfortable for a second, then said, "So, are we done then? Cause I got stuff I gottaâ€|yeah, uh, see you tomorrow!"

We watched Hiccup, even after he was gone. Then the group erupted into astonished conversation.

"What was that!" Snotlout cried, looking indignant.

"I wanna get lessons from his teacher," Tuffnut grumbled. "Because there's no way that was him."

Fishlegs bounced up and down excitedly. "Did you see that? He's got a raised fear factor of at least seven since we lastâ€"

"Just shut up, Legs," Ruffnut snapped.

Only I stood silent, watching the gate. This was an unexpected turn of events.

I had competition.

\* \* \*

><p>Over the next few days, Hiccup's newfound skill continued to astound us. Two days after the Zippleback, Gobber brought out the Gronckle again, this time with waist-high wooden boards to stagger us. He said it was about working around obstacles. Lo and behold, after the Gronckle had knocked Fishlegs to the ground, when the dragon charged Hiccup, he thrust out some kind of grass that the Gronckle immediately took a liking to. It became docile and playful, hardly fighting when we put it back in its cage. As we left the ring, everyone mobbed Hiccup, praising his ability like he had descended from the heavens themselves. I prowled behind them, barely containing my anger. I was supposed to be the one that was the best in class! Now I was second-best to the miracle boy, Hiccup.<p>

He made some excuse about leaving his ax back at the ring, nearly bumped into me, and ran off. I scowled after his retreating figure, wondering if following him wasn't such a bad idea. Maybe that was where he learned his stuff. I stalked back to the village, not speaking to anyone (which wasn't so unusual for me).

The day after that one, it was the Nadder again. I was determined to kill it this time, to make up for my bad performance with the blue dragon last time. When it burst out, I took an ambush route, throwing the ax at it right at the beginning. It lowered its spiked frill, bouncing the ax off of its horns, and it snapped at me. I dove out of the way, and the Nadder headed straight at Hiccup, who had been standing behind me. The Nadder stopped, curious, and sniffed Hiccup's tunic. I took the opportunity to run at the Nadder, screaming in fury. Hiccup quickly began scratching the Nadder under its chin until it dropped to the ground. I stopped mid-swing, panting and just staring at him. He grinned a bit, then saw how angry I was, and had the decency to drop his gaze. He got the usual reception: cheers, advice, requests for advice, and so on. It got so that at dinner, where Hiccup usually sat by himself, he was surrounded by various Vikings, old and young. Hiccup had gone from zero to hero in a mere few hours. I slapped my cup down on the table with unnecessary force.

Hiccup worked his magic on a Terrible Terror the day after as well. The others had never seen a Terrible Terror beforeâ€"at least, those

who hadn't read the Dragon Manual" and had no idea what they were up against. The Terrible Terror was the size of a cat, and looked about as ferocious. Bright green with big, yellow eyes and no teeth, it licked its eye and stared at us.

"Ha," Tuffnut snorted. "It's like the size of my"

The small dragon leaped on his face, attacking with surprising ferocity. The rest of us scattered a good distance away. Chewing on Tuffnut's nose, the Terrible Terror spotted something on the ground. It was a dot of light, a reflection from Hiccup's shield as he wiggled it back and forth. The Terrible Terror was fascinated, following the white dot back into its teeny door. I let that one go a bit, because Terrible Terrors never attacked the village to steal food, and it did not build up a good reputation, killing dragons that were smaller than the ax you killed them with. It wasn't significant enough.

"Wow," Tuffnut said in a nasally voice, rubbing his beat-up nose. "He's better than you ever were."

\_That\_ sure put a twist in my tunic. After the class, I headed into the forest to swing my ax into some trees to let off steam. Over and over again, the ax slammed into the tree with a satisfying thud and a few scattered wood chips. Rolling, I turned the other way to beat up another tree when I stopped. It was Hiccup. He was wearing some ridiculous harness over his green shirt, and carrying a long, cloth bundle. He watched me, poised to throw my ax at him, looking like he had been caught with a hand in the biscuit jar. Hiccup tried to walk away like it hadn't happened, but when I tried to follow him, he had disappeared out of sight. I punched a rock, frustrated at his attempts to hide what he has doing.

When I finally went back home after dark, I heard some clattering at Gobber's forge. It didn't sound like anything was being made. It was just a bunch of noise.

I walked over to the swinging doors that Vikings set their weapons in to be repaired. "Hiccup?" I called out. "Are you in there?"

There was silence. Then Hiccup leaped through the doors with a bang, closing them behind his back. "Astrid!" he exclaimed, a big, goofy grin on his face. It only infuriated me further. "Hi, Astrid, hi Astrid, hi Astrid." He wore a dusty leather apron over his normal clothes.

"Look," I said, "I normally don't care what people do, but you're acting weird."

Hiccup jerked backwards like an invisible string was pulling him. He tried to cover it up by stumbling and regaining his balance.

"Well, weird\_er\_," I said, suspicious.

Then the impossible happened. Hiccup floated in the air for a split second, then disappeared behind the swinging doors of the forge. I leaped forward and pulled the doors open, but no one was there. I even checked under the tables and desks. Nothing.

Something fishy was going on here.



And I intended to find out.

**\*\*OK, that's it for today! Remember, read and review as always. I also have a question for you guys. If I were to post the movie from Hiccup's POV, would you want to read it? Or is it too redundant? Please tell me so I don't make a fool of myself. :)\*\***

## 5. Chapter 5

**\*\*A/N: Here ya go! Chapter five, on the double, and thank you for all your reviews! You guys are awesome!\*\***

Today was the day. It was just me and Hiccup, the two foremost in the class, and this was the final test that would determine who would become a full-fledged Viking next.

As such, I was determined to make him as nervous as possible.

He stood quietly, watching the villagers filing into the outside of the ring. He jumped when he saw me coming towards him.

"Astrid! Uhâ€¦umâ€¦hi." He twiddled with the horns of a helmet clutched in his arms.

I raised an eyebrow. "Nervous?"

"Yeah, I guess." He gave a short laugh.

"Well, good luck then." I loped away, calm and collected, while Hiccup struggled to figure out what I had meant by the short conversastion.

When everyone was assembled, Hiccup and I were herded to the gate. Gobber lifted it open, and I stuck out my ax handle as Hiccup tried to walk past me, and he nearly fell flat on his face. Oaf.

The doors were closed, the audience hushed, and the recruits ready as the dragon was released. I jumped behind the wooden boards that had been set up again and listened to the buzzing of the Gronckle's wings, coming ever closer as it sniffed behind every board it passed. As it flew overhead, I moved sideways to where Hiccup was crouched. I slammed down his shield, which had been held over his face. "And stay out of my way," I snarled. "I'm winning this thing."

I ignored his hasty, "Oh, by all means!" and glanced around the boards for the fat dragon that would become my kill. It had circled around and was returning towards my hiding place. I moved up a few feet, slamming myself against each obstacle as I went. "This time!" I growled to myself. "This time for sure!" \_And I will not let Hiccup beat me to it! \_Hefting my double ax, I cried a war shout, leaping over anything that stood in my way. Only I was too late. Hiccupâ€"blast himâ€"was standing next to a half-asleep Gronckle. He tried to nonverbally explain, gesturing to himself and the Gronckle, but I was too angry to notice. I stood outraged for a brief second, then screamed, "NO! Son of a half-troll, rat-eating, munge-bucket!" I continued in this vein for a while, swinging my ax at the stone floor of the ring.

Hiccup tried to meander off. "So, later!"

Gobber picked him up by the shirt with his hook. "Uh-uh, not so fast."

"I'm kinda late forâ€"

"What?" I growled, thrusting my ax under his chin. "Late for what, exactly?"

"All right, all right," I heard the deep voice of the Chief, full of pride, ring out. He had returned only the day before. "The elder has decided."

The elder was the oldest one in the village, and she was the one to decide who would become a full Viking. I pleaded in my innermost of hearts, begging her to pick me. The shame would be unbearable if she didn't.

Gobber held his hook over my head and looked inquiringly at the elder, Gothi.

\_Please, please, pleaseâ€|\_

The elder shook her head.

\_No!\_

Gobber pointed with his other hand at Hiccup.

\_Not him, not him, please not himâ€|\_

Gothi nodded yes, looking eager, and even pointing at him herself.

"Awww, you've done it, Hiccup!" Gobber yelled excitedly. "You get to kill the dragon!" The crowd erupted into a burst of frenzied cheering. The rest of the class from Dragon Training lifted him onto their shoulders, but not before I gave him a scorching glare, one that he would not soon forget. Then he was gone, swept up in the tide of Vikings that engulfed him. I trembled with rage. He had just stolen my dreams, my goals. He was not going to get away with this.

Despite the celebrations, Hiccup managed to peel himself away from the others and slip off by himself. I followed him, going unnoticed in the partying. After all, I was the loser, the one who had \_almost won.

Hiccup took a winding path through the forest, seemingly random and not following the trails laid out by the elder Vikings. He checked over his shoulders occasionally, like he did in the forge. But I hid every time he did, and soon I saw where he was going. It was a lush cove, hidden by overlapping layers of rock. I smirked to myself. \_So this is where you've been going, you slippery eelâ€|\_

I found my way down the treacherous walls of the cove before Hiccup could arrive and sat down on a rock, humming all the while. In a few minutes I would have my revenge for days of embarrassment.

Soon I heard Hiccup, talking to no one in particular. "We're leaving. Let's pack up, buddy. Looks like you and I are taking a little vacationâ€|foreverâ€|" \_Buddy? \_I saw him come around to the rock I had been sitting on. He was carrying a large basket, and I smelled loads of fish. Stealing and lyingâ€|this just kept getting better and better. He looked up and saw me on the boulder, sharpening my ax on my whetstone.

"Ahh! What theâ€"" he yelped, stumbling backwards. Then he regained his composure. "Uhhh, whatâ€"what are you doing here, Astrid?"

I dropped the whetstone next to me, still not looking at him. "I wanna know what's going on." Spinning my ax upright, I jumped down and relished Hiccup's panicked expression. He was hiding something after all. "No one just \_gets \_as good as you do. \_Especially \_you," I added, with venom in my words.

"Start talking." I got in his face as he stuttered, trying to avoid my questions. "Are you training with someone?"

"Training? I don'tâ€""

I grabbed the front of his less-than-fashionable harness. "It better not involve \_this.\_"

"Yeah," Hiccup stammered, "I know this looks really bad, butâ€""

A snarl sounded from behind him, and I tossed him to the ground, looking for the source of the sound. All I could see was a dark sort of overhang and a few mossy boulders.

Hiccup got right back up. "You're right, you're right, I'm through with the lies!" He stood in front of me, blocking my way with his freckled face. "I've been making outfits! So, you got me," he yammered, grabbing my hand and putting it on the front of his shirt, "it's time everyone knewâ€|drag me backâ€|here weâ€""

I readjusted my grip on his hand and twisted his arm backwards.

"â€"goooooww! Why would you do tha-ow!" He crumpled to the ground and winced as I kicked him in the ribs.

"\_That's \_for the lies. And \_that's\_â€"" I said, bringing the ax down on his midriff with a whoosh of air, "for everything else." Another growl, louder than this time, ripped through the air. I whirled around to face the overhang, which wasn't dark and empty anymore. An enormous black dragon bared his teeth at me from the rocks, glaring at me with his acid green eyes. It was like no dragon I had ever seen before. And it was wearingâ€"of all thingsâ€"a \_saddle\_. It began to charge, roaring.

I tackled Hiccup to the ground. "Get down!" I shouted. The dragon came closer and closer with bounds covering five feet at a time. "Run!" I screamed at Hiccup. "Run!" I rolled, stood up and swung my ax with a roar of challenge to match its own. The dragon pounced, not caring about the blade headed towards his throat.

"NOOOO!" Hiccup leaped towards my ax, throwing it backwards along with me. He slid the ax out of my reach and turned to the dragon.

"Whoa, whoa! It's all right!" he said over the snarls of the nightmare dragon. "She's a friend."

Was I? Was I friends with a lunatic? The dragon calmed down, but still glared at me with obvious venom. He thrust his head towards me, and Hiccup put his hands on its head, holding it back. "You just scared him," he said apologetically.

"\_I \_scared \_him?\_" I said hysterically. I jumped back as the dragon snorted. It was only then that I realized what kind of dragon it must be. Black, sleek, and unfamiliar a Night Fury. So Hiccup hadn't been lying when he said he had hit a Night Fury all those days ago. He just hadn't killed it. He had made it his \_pet.\_ I lifted my gaze to stare at Hiccup. "Who is 'him'?"

The dragon sat up and narrowed his eyes at me. "Astrid," Hiccup said, "Toothless. Toothless," he reproached the dragon, "Astrid." Toothless hissed at me with distaste.

I shook my head at Hiccup, then ran as fast as I could in the other direction, out of the cove. The Tribe had to know about this. He was no Viking, and everything in the ring had been a trick. He was friends with these monsters? I can't believe I actually followed him around, the little

My thoughts came to a screeching halt as I was suddenly lifted into the air. I felt claws scrape against my arm, and I realized that Hiccup and the dragon had found me. "Great Odin's ghost! Oh, this is!" was all I could get out. I screamed, and tried to clutch the scaly leg that held me as the ground became impossibly far away. The leg released me as Toothless dropped me onto a branch, forty feet in the air. The lake rippled beneath my feet, and the tree bent over as the Night Fury landed on the boughs. I looked up and saw Hiccup astride the black beast, with his foot fitted into some kind of stirrup that ran all the way back to and I began to realize all the way back to a makeshift tailfin that mirrored the one already there. "Hiccup!" I yelped, outraged. "Get me down from here!"

"You have to give me a chance to explain," he called back.

Yeah, right. "I am not listening to \_anything\_ you have to say!" I began to inch towards the trunk of the tree. How could I, when he makes friends with \_dragons?\_ He's insane.

"Then I won't speak." I stopped, surprised. "Just let me show you."

What does he? Oh, he wants me to \_ride \_the dragon now? I looked at the grass so far beneath me. No way.

"Please, Astrid."

I sighed. I was in no position to argue, and it was the only way I could get down without killing myself; namely, climbing down the tree. I would tell the others once I was back on the ground. Pulling myself up, I edged along the branch to the dragon. Hiccup held out his hand, and I smacked it away. \_I can get on myself, thank you.\_ Heaving up, I was soon on the dragon. Oh, gosh, this was embarrassing. I hoped no one saw me. "Now get me down," I demanded, irritated by the tremor in my voice.

Hiccup patted his mount on the side of his neck. "Toothless, down," he said. "Gently."

Toothless' wings snapped open and were still for a second. I tensed. "See?" Hiccup said to me. "Nothing to be afraid of."

The dragon shot into the sky, wings pumping. I was startled by the sudden acceleration, and I lost control. I screamed as I began sliding backwards, not being attached to the saddle. I clutched at Hiccup as we flattened out. "Toothless! What's wrong with you? Bad dragon!" Hiccup yelled. "He-he's not usually like this!"

The vast black wings disappeared from my sides.

"Oh, no."

We plummeted towards the ocean. I felt myself become weightless as gravity released its hold on us. Then we were underwater. I only had a second to realize the shock of it before Toothless surfaced, soaring back into the air again. He dipped in and out of the waves, and every jump felt like a brush with death.

"Toothless, what are you doing, we need her to \_like \_us!" But Toothless had already gone upwards again. He fell, spinning around and around.

As the world whirled sickeningly around me, I gasped, "All right, I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Just get me off of this thing."

We stopped suddenly, floating in the still air. I had squeezed my eyes shut tight, and when the dragon had stopped moving, I cracked open my eyelids.

The scene before me was otherworldly. A fiery sunset, gold and amber and pink, glowed on the horizon ahead of us. A ceiling of thick clouds hovered above us, shining in the evening light. I ran my hand through the mist, feeling drops of water collect on my palm, a place I had once thought was unreachable, but that I could now hold in the palm of my hand. The chill air numbed my face, and the strong breeze caused my hair to float out of my face. Pillars and towers surrounded us, all made out of the white fluff. I marveled at the perfection. Toothless turned an upside-down loop, and we emerged above the clouds in a silver-spun landscape of light. Bright colors flashed around us, the aurora borealis. It was breathtaking. I rested my chin on Hiccup's shoulder, gazing at the island so far below us. Toothless wove in and out of the harbor statues, the ones with burning fires in their mouths. Everything was painted a shining silver.

"All right," I spoke up. "I admit it. This is pretty cool. It's amazing." I set my hand on Toothless' warm neck. "He's amazing." The neck under me vibrated as the dragon hummed. What had I been thinking? Guess they're not so bad after all.

I looked at Hiccup. "Hiccup, what are you going to do? Your final exam is tomorrow! You know you're going to have to \_kill a dragon.\_" I whispered the last few words, out of earshot of Toothless.

"Don't remind me."

Toothless dropped like a stone without warning. He sank into a swath of mist so thick I couldn't see more than five feet around me. He was panicked, looking around jerkily.

"Toothless, what's going on?" Hiccup said, worried. Toothless ignored him. I glanced around again, trying to figure out where we were, when I saw a scarlet figure loom out of the darkness next to us. "Hiccup!" I whispered.

He looked over at the Monstrous Nightmare flapping next to Toothless. "Get down," he hissed, and we flattened ourselves as best we could, making us scarce. Dragons emerged out of the fog, not noticing the two humans in their midst. Each one carried some sort of dead prey.

"What's going on?" I whispered.

"I don't know." Hiccup put a hand on Toothless' neck. "OK, bud, you've got to get us out of here." The Night Fury shook off his touch like a fly. Hiccup looked back at me, the worry in his green eyes clear. He studied the carcasses of fish, sheep, and cows. "Looks like they're hauling in their kill."

"What does that make us?" I asked, voice trembling.

For that, Hiccup had no answer. Toothless dropped a good ten feet, and I yelped a bit as we skimmed over the water. Dragons must have good blindsense; they darted in and out of rocks and stone columns I wouldn't have recognized in the dark shroud of fog. My anxiety grew with every flap of Toothless' black wings. Where was he taking us?

Without warning, we plunged into a glowing orange tunnel. The heat hit us with the force of a physical blow. We dropped and swerved through a passageway that led into the heart of a black mountain. A cavernous hole dominated the inside; it was choked up with haze and sparks. I couldn't even see the bottom. The smell of sulfur and ashes hung in the air. Along the walls of the hole were various caves and ledges, where dragons of every kind perched and slept.

I caught my breath. \_The dragons' nest!\_

"What my dad wouldn't give to find this," Hiccup murmured.

Toothless landed on a hidden platform at the very top. He looked around, seeming almost puzzled, and watched the hole with alert eyes.

"Well," Hiccup said, voice cracking a bit, "it's nice to know that all of our food has been dumped down a hole."

I watched a Monstrous Nightmare dump a huge fish into the pit. "They're not eating any of it." We saw a Gronckle, wings humming, fly above the hole where the food was being dropped. Hovering for a moment, it burped up a small fish. It scratched its ear happily, until a grumble came out from the glowing hole.

A titanic head came upwards from the sparks and swallowed the Gronckle whole. I gasped in horror. "Whatâ€"is that?"

Hiccup patted Toothless again. "Toothless, we gotta get out of here." The giant dragon, with teeth as big as trees and rough, bumpy blue skin, found us with its beady eyes. It snorted and leaped forwards with a grating of claws on stone.

"Now!" Toothless jumped into the air as the rest of the dragons took flight in fear. I heard a nasty crunch and a squeal behind us, and desperately prayed for escape. Toothless emerged from the volcano, panting, and we soared back to the island in stunned silence.

\*\*So, that was probably the most canon it'll get from here on out. I promise more deleted scenes in the future! Keep those reviews coming, please! :)\*\*

## 6. Chapter 6

\*\*A/N: Well, it's been a while...but I found the time to update. Presenting...chapter six! Still pretty canon...I promise the next chapter will be original. Partly. Really!\*\*

"It totally makes sense!" I exclaimed, as Toothless touched back down in the cove. "It's like a giant beehive. They're the workers and that's their queen. It controls them." I began to run. "C'mon, let's find your dad."

Hiccup grabbed my arm. "No, Astrid, wait! They'll kill Toothless! No, we have to think this through. Carefully."

He walked back to Toothless. I stared after him in disbelief. "Hiccup, we just discovered the dragons' \_nest.\_ The thing we've been after since Vikings first sailed here. And you want to keep it a secret? To protect your pet dragon? Are you serious?"

Hiccup slowly spun to face me, his face deadly serious in the bright moonlight. "Yes."

I realized that I had gone too far. Hiccup's relationship with his dragon was deeper than I thought. "OK," I said hesitantly. "Then what do we do?"

"Just give me till tomorrow. I'll figure something out."

I was quiet for a minute. Then I punched Hiccup in the arm. "That's for kidnapping me."

Hiccup rubbed his arm, giving Toothless an incredulous look.

Then I did something I would have never done an hour ago. I gave Hiccup a kiss on the cheek and said, "That's for everything else." Then I ran off, embarrassed.

\* \* \*

><p>My heart was pounding harder than ever before. I stood at the edge of the kill ring, watching Stoick talk to the crowd before him. "Well, I can show my face in public again!" That drew a hearty chuckle from the gathered Vikings. Stoick raised his hand for silence.<p>

"If someone had told me in a few short weeks, Hiccup would go from beingâ€"well, Hiccupâ€"to placing first in Dragon Training, I would've tied him to a mast and shipped him off, for fear he'd gone mad!" Everyone cheered in approval. "But here we are. And no one is more surprisedâ€"or more proudâ€"than I am. Today my son becomes a Viking. Today, he becomes one of us!"

Amid the noise from the crowd, I slipped away from the ring and walked slowly to the gated entrance. Hiccup stood there, looking nervous and pale. His Viking helmet was in his hands.

"Be careful with that dragon," I said over the cheering.

Hiccup watched his father sit the chair set up for him. "It's not the dragon I'm worried about."

"What are you going to do?"

"Put an end to this. I have to try." He turned to me. "Astrid, if anythingâ€"goes wrongâ€"just make sure they don't find Toothless." His eyes were round and worried, about as passive as a crystal-clear pond. How could I tell him it was only a matter of time before they squeezed the truth out of him?

"I will," I said quietly. Then, more urgently, "Just promise me it won't go wrong."

Hiccup opened his mouth, but before he could say anything, Gobber appeared through the gate. "It's time, Hiccup. Knock 'em dead." Hiccup glanced back despairingly at the joke. I motioned for him to go.

The gate clunked open. Hiccup breathed out audibly and put his helmet on his head. Stepping out, he looked up at Stoick, and forced himself to walk to the makeshift weapon rack in the middle of the ring. He was allowed to use any method, as long as the dragon's dead body lay in the ring by the time he was done. Hiccup selected a shield and a small knife of the same make as his old one. I knew that he picked up the weapons just for show. He would never hurt a scale of any dragon he met. And now I finally understood why.

Hiccup called out, "I'm ready." The doors on the cage in front of him were unbarred.

With a burst of liquid fire, the Monstrous Nightmare sprang out, roaring its fury. It was encased in flames, a special tactic of its own. The doors were covered in molten fire. The dragon leaped to the top of the enclosure, belting out surges of flames through the chains. Its scales were cooling off now; under the fire, I saw that it was an angry red, with black horns and spikes. Its amber eyes found Hiccup's frozen figure below it, and the Monstrous Nightmare slowly lowered itself to the floor of the ring. It began to prowl forward. Hiccup walked backwards as the dragon regarded him with flared nostrils.

"Go on, Hiccup!" someone shouted. "Give it to 'im!"

I held my breath. \_Please don't hurt it, Hiccupâ€"\_|\_

Fortunately, Hiccup was sticking to his plan, despite the hundreds of



eyes on him. He loosely dropped his dagger and shield to the side with a clatter. A mutter of apprehension ran through the crowd. Hiccup was good, but not good enough that he could kill a dragon with his bare hands. He held out those hands and spoke calmly to the dragon. "It's OK, it's all right." Looking up, he took off his helmet and threw it to the side. "I'm not one of them," he said, loud enough to be heard by all.

The dragon watched the helmet and weapons go down with surprise.

I searched the older Vikings nervously. They were shocked. Stoick's face grew dark. "Stop the fight," he ordered.

"No," Hiccup said, determined. He held out his hand again. "I need you all to see this."

His fingers drew closer and closer to the dragon's snout. "They're not what we think they are," he continued. "We don't have to kill them."

A ripple of astonishment ran through the group. Everyone looked at Stoick. He was furious, eyes ablaze as he watched his only son defy him. "I said, stop the fight!" he roared, slamming his hammer onto the bars of the ring. It created a deafening clang.

The dragon's pupils contracted into slits, and it snapped at Hiccup's hand, wild and ferocious once more. Hiccup yanked his hand away and scrambled backwards, startled by the move. I gasped and shouted "Hiccup!" through the bars of the gate. It was too heavy for me to lift by myself. I grabbed an ax off of the wall and wedged it under the floor and the gate. Thrusting myself under the doorway, I entered the ring. All of this I did without thinking.

Hiccup could not keep this up for much longer. Looking around, I seized a hammer that had fallen off of the weapons rack and flung it at the dragon's face. It hit it solidly upside the head, and soon I was its new target. Hiccup and I raced around the ring, keeping out of the way of the Monstrous Nightmare. All of a sudden, I heard Stoick fling open the gate. "This way!" he yelled.

It was a race for safety. I charged into Stoick's arms. He held out his other arm for Hiccup. I watched, gasping for air, as Hiccup ran as fast as he could to the gate. He was almost there when the dragon chasing him belched out a column of fire that splashed on the side of the exit, right in front of him. Hiccup dove to the side to avoid being scorched.

I watched, terrified, as the dragon trapped Hiccup underneath its claws. "No!" I cried.

A familiar screech filled the air as a dark shape hurtled towards the kill ring. \_Toothless!\_ A cloud of smoke exploded as Toothless hurled a ball of fire at the chains enclosing the ring. He must have heard Hiccup's yells from on far! But how did he get out of the cove?

Toothless and the Monstrous Nightmare emerged out of the cloud of smoke, with Toothless snapping at the latter's neck. Everyone watched in chaos as the Night Fury drove the other dragon away from Hiccup. His opponent pinned him for a moment, but nothing could stop

Toothless from protecting his friend. Backing up, Toothless spread his wings in front of Hiccup, hiding him from the imminent threat. Again and again the Monstrous Nightmare tried to attack Hiccup, and again and again Toothless thwarted him. The other dragon soon recognized defeat, and slunk off.

I watched as Hiccup urged Toothless to go on without him. Loyal Toothless refused to leave Hiccup's side. Vikings were pouring in from every side, yelling, all wanting to be the first to kill a Night Fury. Over the clamor, I heard Hiccup shout, "Go, Toothless! Get out of here!"

Stoick bared his teeth and grabbed another ax off of the wall. "Stoick, no!" I cried. I had to do something. I had to. But there was no way I could stop a flood of built-up fury. Toothless caught sight of the Viking Chief running towards him.

Oh, no.

Leaping forwards with open jaws, Toothless knocked down three Vikings before tackling Stoick. His hammer disappeared in the fray. Gas curled out of the Night Fury's mouth as he prepared to blast Stoick into pieces. I ran forward, knowing it was too late.

"NOOOOO!"

Hiccup had saved his dad. Toothless wouldn't have stopped for anyone except him. Puzzled, he glanced back at Hiccup. Then he vanished from sight in a frenzy of blows. Hiccup raced forward to stop them, but I held him back, knowing that it wouldn't have helped. "Please, don't hurt him!" he tried to shout over everyone yelling. Seeing Hiccup's pain made me want to cry. I saw Stoick stand up, glaring at Toothless while he whined pitifully. He pushed aside the ax that was offered to him. "Put it with the others," he ordered. At least he had retained some of his sanity. Then he snatched Hiccup by the back of his shirt, like a mother her kitten. Toothless was dragged into the cage ready and waiting for him. As the two friends separated, the rest of the Dragon Training class jumped down from the side of the ring and watched in shocked silence.

\*\*\*sniff sniff\*\*\*

\*\*OK, I'm good. Just hit that button down there, please? :3 I'm gonna go work on the next chapter...\*\*

## 7. Chapter 7

\*\*A/N: All right, THAT took a while. But I finally fixed a few things and got it online. Chapter seven, the climax of the story AND the promised original scene. Enjoy!\*\*

"We were wrong," Fishlegs said. "We were wrong about them the whole time."

The kill ring was empty. Everyone else was unofficially celebrating the capture of the Night Fury. The Dragon Manual was being written in even as we spoke.

"And to think I called him a wimp!" Tuffnut muttered, for the first time acting sincere.

I was too hurt and shocked to speak. It was frustrating to know that we knew what was right, and everyone else wouldn't listen. I pictured Hiccup trying to explain things to Stoick, and Stoick brushing his son aside as usual. As long as Hiccup did some fast talking and came back soon, we might have a chance of fixing things. \_Ha, \_I thought, \_the only thing we could do to fix things is leave. \_Which I was seriously considering. I gave another yank on the lock to Toothless' cage and banged my head on the metal-plated wood. Inside, Toothless growled and warbled, and the sound of it broke my heart. Boy, I was being such a softie today.

"We've got to do \_something,\_" Snotlout pressed us.

"There's nothing to do, Snotlout," I said in a monotone. "That's the problem." I hated saying the words, but it was true. "Well, it could always be worse. They could do something crazy like use Toothless to find the island, lock him onto a ship and take him away or something like that."

A door banged, far away, and I heard Stoick yell, "Ready the ships!" Gobber limped through the gate of the ring, looking determined. "Out of the way," he said. Then he chuckled. "You'll get your chance to see the beast when we're done with him. After we drive the dragons out, this one is being executed. Ah, it'll be good to have some justice, eh?"

We all looked at each other before breaking out into a storm of protest.

"You can't do this, Gobber!"

"Hiccup would be crushed!"

"Tell Stoick to call it off!"

Gobber was stunned. "This is no time to be soft-hearted!" he sputtered, after gaping at us. "Where did you get the idea that dragons were our friends?"

"Didn't you see?" Snotlout said angrily. "That Night Fury was \_protecting \_him!"

"And how do you know he hadn't turned against us?" Gobber demanded. He shook his head. "I had high hopes for that boy. But it all came to naught. Stoick's disowned him."

My jaw dropped. "\_What?\_"

"And rightly so. That boy is no Viking, that's for sure." A few more Vikings came in behind him, and Gobber unlocked Toothless' cage. "Off with you, now," he ordered. "We're off to the dragon's nest. It's no place for ones as young as you lot."

I gritted my teeth and refrained from mentioning that I had been there on the back of a Night Fury and survived the biggest dragon in existence and actually \_kissed \_Hiccup afterwards.

The giant dragon. My eyes widened. "Gobber, you can't go there!"

He turned. "It's time to start acting for the greater good of the village, Astrid. We've got to protect our families! And what about our children? Do you want them to have to learn to fight the dragons? Nope, no can do."

We protested, but they opened the doors and secured Toothless anyways. He was thrashing, growling through the leather band fitted around his mouth. I couldn't bear it. Running forward, I wrapped my arms around Toothless' neck. "I can't let you! For Hiccup's sake, please, Gobber!" His scaly skin was beaded with sweat and inflating and deflating with his panicked breathing.

Gobber pulled me off none too gently. "We'll deal with you when you get back, Astrid." And with that, they dragged Toothless out of the ring.

As the sounds of his struggling faded, everyone turned and looked at me. "Wow, Astrid," Snotlout said, "maybe you should be quiet for a while."

I didn't smile at the joke, though the accuracy of my prediction was eerie. "I have to find Hiccup," I said, running out of the ring.

Outside, there was a bustle of activity. Men carried weapons and supplies for the trip to the dragons' nest. I had to duck several times in order to avoid getting hit on the head with various objects. The whole time I searched for Hiccup, but he was nowhere to be found.

I spotted Toothless, strapped down and tied up, on a leaving ship, and I clenched my fists. Were Vikings so blind that they couldn't see in front of their own noses? I stopped for a moment, looking up while I panted with my hands on my hips, and saw someone up on the top of the cliff. I could just barely make out brown fur and a green shirt. Hiccup.

By the time I reached the top of the walkway where Hiccup was, the ships had all gone, and everyone had gone back inside. I stood behind him for a moment, then stepped up beside him. He glanced at me, and continued to watch the churning sea. I was silent for a moment.

"It's a mess," I spoke into the empty air. "You've lost everything: your father, your tribe, your best friendâ€¦"

"Thank you for summing that up." Another pause. Then Hiccup muttered to himself, "Why couldn't I have just killed that dragon when I found him in the woods? It would've been better for everyone."

"Yep, the rest of us would have done it." I turned to look at him. "So why didn't you?"

Hiccup didn't say anything. He looked away from the sea, at his boot-clad feet on the boards.

"Why didn't you?" I pressed him.

"I don't know." Hiccup kicked the ground. "I couldn't."

"That's not an answer."

Hiccup tossed his hands in the air. "Why is this so important to you all of a sudden?"

"Because I want to remember what you say. Right now." \_And I want to know what makes you different than the others.\_ But I dared not say that and offend him on accident.

"Whatâ€"for the love ofâ€" Hiccup faced me. "I was a coward! I was weak! I wouldn't kill a dragon!"

"You said 'wouldn't' that time," I noticed.

"Whatever! I wouldn't!" Hiccup stabbed a finger downwards. "Three hundred years, and I'm the first Viking who wouldn't kill a dragon." He and I stared for a minute at each other. Hiccup took it as amusement, and turned angrily towards the horizon.

"First to ride one, though," I said encouragingly, after a pause. "Soâ€|?"

Hiccup spun slowly to face me again. "I wouldn't kill him because he looked as frightened as I was," he said. "I looked at him, and I saw myself."

I motioned towards the empty waters with my chin. "I bet he's really frightened now. What are you gonna do about it?"

Hiccup shrugged. "Prob'ly something stupid."

I grinned. "Good, but you've already done that."

Hiccup's eyes brightened as he said, "Then something crazy." He began to run back down the steps to the village.

"That's more like it," I said to myself, and ran after him.

\* \* \*

><p>While following Hiccup, I ran into the gang, which had been following me following Hiccup. "What's going on?" Fishlegs asked. "We saw Hiccup run by."<p>

"He's got a plan," was all I said. "Come on, we've got to help him."

"Oh, I love plans!" Snotlout exclaimed as we jogged to the ring. "What is it?"

"That," I said, huffing, "I don't know."

We found Hiccup standing by the cage of the Monstrous Nightmare he had fought not so long ago. We all got the same notion of what Hiccup wanted us to do at once.

"If you're planning on getting eaten," Fishlegs said, "I'd definitely go with the Gronckle."

Hiccup turned to see the twins, Snotlout, Fishlegs and I ready for battle. He seemed surprised that we would ever help someone like him.

Tuffnut shoved his twin aside. "You were wise to seek help from the world's most deadly weapon," he said pompously. "You know me."

Snotlout bumped him aside. "I love this plan!" he said loudly. Ruffnut smacked him away as well.

"You're crazy," she snarled. Then she leaned closer. "I like that."

I pulled her away from Hiccup. \_Um, we were together way before you even started liking him. \_"So," I said, putting my hands on my side. "What is the plan?"

We all listened eagerly as Hiccup outlined his plan. It was dangerous, improvised, and depended on way too many odds. It was perfect. We began releasing various dragons, slowly and carefully. Hiccup worked his magic on each of them, convincing them that we meant no harm, and soon we had a ragtag group of archenemies.

Snotlout was the only reluctant one. He wouldn't get the Monstrous Nightmare himself, so we all watched Hiccup walk out of the cage, completely unharmed, with the Monstrous Nightmare in tow behind him. I half-expected the dragon to recognize Hiccup and pounce forward, but the red monster was entirely at ease with him.

Hiccup and the dragon drew level with Snotlout. He shifted in place, a pained look on his face. Then I saw him bend over and scoop a broken spearhead from the ground.

I hit him on the arm. "Uh-uh," I said. Snotlout put down the weapon grudgingly. As he straightened up, Hiccup took his arm and guided it over to the Monstrous Nightmare's snout.

"Wait! What are you!" he yelled.

"Shhhh," Hiccup said, as the dragon snorted at the noise. Snotlout's breathing grew panicked as his hand got closer to the red scales. "It's OK," Hiccup said. "It's OK."

Snotlout's hand touched the dragon's nose. A grin grew on his smug face, and he laughed at his success. Hiccup released the dragon and moved to a box on the side of the ring full of odds and ends.

"Where're you going!" Snotlout yelled, watching the dragon nervously. It was funny to see how much backbone he really had when placed in a situation where the dragon could easily take him out.

Hiccup pulled a coil of rope from the box. "You're going to need something to hold on."

As Hiccup began to show Snotlout how to sit on a dragon correctly, Ruffnut leaned over to me. "Hot guy you got there."

"Is he?" I said, not really thinking about it.

Ruffnut rolled her eyes. "We all know how you guys like each other! Come on! How could we miss it?"

I had to admit she was right. "So what do I do?" I said sarcastically. "Pledge my undying love for him?"

Before Ruffnut could answer, Hiccup called for the twins. Snotlout was already seated on the Monstrous Nightmare, with a shield protecting his back. The twins were seated on the Hideous Zippleback, which seemed like the perfect dragon for them. Two different personalities that always stick together. Fishlegs got his wish, astride the Gronckle. Then it was my turn.

I approached the twitchy Nadder, marveling that I had been trying to kill it only a few days ago. It peered down at me, squawking curiously. At first I was a bit indignant. Nadders were the least intelligent of dragons, in my opinion. But then I realized that it would work in my favor. The dragon would be less likely to disobey me when given an order.

I heard Hiccup come up behind me. He patted the Deadly Nadder to tell it that everything was fine, and then he turned to me. "Nervous?" he asked.

I let out the most nerve-wracking laugh I've yet. "No way! Me, nervous?" I leaned in. "All right, maybe just a bit," I whispered, out of earshot of the others.

Hiccup smiled. "It'll be all right. The trick is to keep your cool so the dragon will, too." He helped me mount, placing a steadying hand on my back while I stepped on the Nadder's leg. "Trust me, they freak out when you don't." He tied the extra rope over my waist and my legs and around the dragon's middle. Then he leaped on in front of me.

"Everyone ready?" he yelled. The dragons snorted with excitement as everyone shouted in agreement. He urged the Nadder upwards by means I couldn't tell. Having ridden Toothless before, I was used to extreme heights. But, as the other dragons followed suit, I heard cries from the others. Eventually they got a grip on themselves, but I still saw Snotlout clinging with unnecessary tightness to his mount's horns.

The flight over the ocean was uneventful except for the turmoil in my head. What was happening right now? Had the enormous dragon awakened yet? How would Stoick and the others defeat it with a few simple catapults and weapons? No, I was certain Hiccup was the only one who knew how to defeat this death. I reviewed the plan in my head again and again, making sure I knew what to do if anything should go wrong.

The bank of fog approached up ahead. "Don't try to steer," Hiccup called. "The dragons know where to go."

They hardly needed to rely on their instinct, though. As I squinted through the damp fog, a flash of orange grew up ahead. It expanded into a wave, and I saw bits of wood floating on the water,

ablaze.

Hiccup voiced what I had realized a second before I could say it myself: "It burned the ships."

The dragons soared upwards on the cushion of hot air coming from the fires below. I swept my gaze around the pebbled beach, and, to my shock, saw Gobber and Stoick baiting the monster dragon! It must have been a hundred feet high and just as long. A clubbed tail swung behind it, and its scales were barbed with red spikes and blue knobs. It had a mouth much too crowded with huge teeth that were longer than spears.

"Hiccup! Down there!" I screamed, watching the giant dragon open its mouth, aiming directly to torch Stoick. Hiccup saw this, and he wheeled the Nadder around to the back of the dragon's frilled head. The others followed behind. Green smoke filled its mouth, the gas that would ignite into flame at will. Hiccup yelled to Fishlegs, "Give it everything you've got!"

A fireball exploded from the mouth of the Gronckle; it hit the huge dragon in the back of its thick skull. It closed its mouth, shaking its head and growling, as we emerged from behind the dragon in sight of everybody.

"Ruff! Tuff! Watch your backs!" Hiccup shouted, as the bony frill on the giant dragon swung past us. I caught sight of Stoick watching us from below, Gobber standing next to him. I felt a flicker of pride. \_We were right all along, Gobber.\_

The gang flew away to regroup and specify the plan. The dragons flapped in a circle so as to better let us hear each other. "Fishlegs, break it down!"

"OK!" Fishlegs studied the dragon that was smashing boats on the rocks in fury. "Heavily armored skull and tail made for bashing and crushing; steer clear of both! Small eyes, large nostrils; relies on hearing and smell!"

"All right," Hiccup said. "You and Snotlout hang out in its blind spot. Make some noise; keep it confused." He pointed at the Zippleback. "Ruff, Tuff, find out if it has a shot limit. Make it mad."

"That's my specialty!" Ruffnut shouted proudly, over the titanic bellows of the monster dragon.

"Since when?" Tuffnut argued. "Everyone knows I'm more irritating. See?" He flipped the head he was riding on upside-down, making faces at Ruffnut.

"Just do what I told you!" Hiccup said loudly. "I'll be back as soon as I can to help!"

"Don't worry; we got it covered!" Snotlout shouted, and the circle broke up. Hiccup steered the Nadder to the boats, and the others flew in the direction of the gigantic dragon. I heard shouted insults from Ruffnut and Tuffnut, and gouts of fire from their target.

It was nearly impossible to see anything through the licking flames



that engulfed the boats. We flew the Nadder back and forth, but I could find no sign of Toothless. However, I heard Hiccup shout, "There!" I followed his pointing finger and spotted a black figure peering up at us with green eyes. The Nadder swerved and hovered over the boats. Hiccup crouched on the back of the Deadly Nadder, and then jumped, landing squarely on the deck of Toothless' boat. He looked back up at me. "Go help the others!"

I didn't want to leave; I wanted to stay with Hiccup and Toothless and protect them from the evil dragon that stumbled closer and closer with every crash of Snotlout's and Fishlegs' shields. But I knew that it was part of the plan, and any digression could lead to disaster. I urged the Nadder towards the rest of the group just in time to see everything go wrong.

Snotlout's dragon flapped clumsily into the side of the blue dragon's head. The sound! Of course! Not only did the banging confuse the giant dragon, it confused the others' mounts as well! I saw Snotlout go flying, a mere speck in the gray air. Fishlegs lost control, too; he tossed his hammer to Snotlout before the Gronckle crash-landed on the beach. The giant dragon's foot lifted. Fishlegs yelled and scrabbled to get a hold on the loose stones of the beach.

I swooped past Snotlout, who was standing on the eyelid of the dragon. "I can't miss!" he yelled gleefully as he brought the hammer down on the giant eye below him. "What's wrong, buddy? Got something in your eye?"

I laughed and yelled, "Yeah! You're the Viking!" He looked up, and smashed the dragon again. A little too hard this time.

With a snort, the enormous dragon tossed its head, sending Snotlout over the top. Snotlout just barely grabbed hold of its frill before he fell. I watched in dismay, then horror, as its tail swung around to the ships, destroying several of the masts. It stamped its foot down into the ocean. A wave ran through the still water, and the boats overturned with the force of it.

\_Hiccup! No! NO!\_

I was not the only one who saw him go underwater. Stoick tossed aside his shield and dived into the water to rescue his son. Only Hiccup's plan kept me in place as I watched frantically for any sign of them.

Stoick burst through the water, dragging Hiccup's prone form behind him. My heart stopped beating for a moment before Hiccup coughed up water and Stoick dived back under the waves to rescue Toothless.

Wait. Rescue Toothless? He must have had a change of heart after all. I only hoped Toothless felt the same.

In a halo of water droplets, Toothless burst forth from the water, pulling Stoick behind him. I gasped in relief as Toothless dropped him on the beach and landed on the ground, motioning for Hiccup to get on. Before Hiccup could leave, Stoick grabbed him by the arm and spoke to him, and somehow, I knew they'd made up. Then Toothless launched himself skyward.

"He's up!" I yelled, exhilarated. I was so sure they had drowned! I whirled to face the twins, who had come up behind me. "Get Snotlout out of there!" I directed.

"On it!" they yelled at the same time.

"I was on it first!" Tuffnut said, pushing Ruffnut.

They squabbled all the way to save Snotlout. I circled behind them, making sure everything went all right. Snotlout leaped off of the dragon and landed in the fork of the Zippleback's neck.

"I can't believe that worked!" Tuffnut yelled.

I moved the Nadder to follow them, but a powerful gush of wind sucked me backwards. I managed to look behind my shoulder and saw the gaping maw of the giant dragon pulling air into its mouth, and me along with it. The suction was so strong, I was lifted off of the Deadly Nadder's back, and was left hanging on for dear life by my fingertips. I heard the screech of a Night Fury, and was blinded by a flash of violet light as Toothless smacked a big one into the monstrous dragon's mouth.

The shock jolted me off of the Nadder. I scrabbled at empty air. The Nadder had flown away and it was just me. I yelled, and realized I was going to die.

\_Whoosh!\_ Toothless darted under me in a daredevil dive. I felt claws snatch my leg, and I had never been more grateful to be kidnapped by a dragon than that exact moment. Toothless flipped his head down to look at me, and I grinned at him. To my amazement, he smiled back, with toothless gums. The ground became the ground again as he dropped me upright on the island and swooped off.

I panted, watching Hiccup soar back into the sky astride his mount. It was an awesome sight. "Go," I breathed.

Toothless gained more height, and then dropped in another spectacular dive that ended in an explosive fireball. The great dragon stumbled and fell on its side with a bellow of fury. Running up beside the other Vikings, I waved dust away from my face and coughed.

A shadow covered the crowd. I looked up to see a colossal wing unfold, dust and rocks falling from the billowing membrane. The dragon stumbled upright and, with a mighty sweep of its wings and a trembling in the ground, it threw itself into the sky. The displacement of air made my ears pop. When I looked back up, Toothless and Hiccup were winging their way towards a forest of rock. They flew gracefully in between the columns, but the dragon was not deterred. It smashed through the stone, sending bits of rock flying at the beach. As the pair swooped past the crowd of Vikings on the shore, we cheered for them, and ducked when the giant dragon bowled past us with an onslaught of stone.

I watched with anxiety as Toothless' small figure began rising into the clouds. The dragon followed, roaring angrily, and spurted a wave of flame at him. I gasped as Toothless dodged the fire, and the huge dragon flew right through it. Dragons were incredibly fireproof up to the point of literally swimming in it, but it was still a shock to see anything go through flames unharmed.

Toothless was the first to disappear, and the giant dragon soon followed. We watched in suspense as the growls of the dragon ripped through the air, easily mistaken for thunder.

A burst of violet light startled us; Snotlout jumped, and Fishlegs actually yelped. But we were too tense to be talking. One after another, the flashes of fire lit up the sky like lightning. The eerie shape of the enormous dragon could be seen with each blast, only a silhouette among the gray clouds.

\_Be careful, Hiccup!\_

Without warning, the clouds were lighted with the orange light of fire. Hiccup was doing a good job of irritating the blue monster. The fire dissipated, but a single flame crossed the sky like an ember. A bad feeling grew in my stomach, confirmed when the two enemies plunged out of the sky, the smaller speck trailing fire. I froze as they plummeted to the ground, the dragon's snapping teeth only a few feet from Toothless' burning tail. I held my breath. \_Please, please work!\_

Suddenly, Toothless flipped around as the dragon's mouth filled with flammable green gas. The Night Fury shot one last blast of fire into the gigantic dragon's mouth. The gas turned into flame, but it went down its gullet instead of out the other way. The dragon was blowing up from the inside.

It was chaos; I lost sight of Hiccup as everyone surged backwards to avoid the inevitable. Stoick was at the front, holding out his arms to protect us while searching earnestly for Hiccup.

The monster dragon crashed into the ground in a mushroom cloud of smoke. A blast of hot air accompanied the explosion, and we ducked and fell backwards.

The giant was finally gone.

But at what price?

\*\*I almost don't want to write what happens next...well, thanks for reading and please give feedback! Fire, praise, whatever. Right down there.\*\*

## 8. Chapter 8

\*\*A/N: Yes! Two stories in one night! I abandoned this one, and while I updated Simple Things, it was just calling my name...so I fixed it a bit, took a look at all of your reviews (which really helped me a lot!) and finished up the story. Here it is, chapter eight of Welcome to Dragon Training!\*\*

The flames went out slowly, but small fires still burned among the wreckage. The air was thick and gray, and it stung my lungs as I gasped for breath, walking over the stones of the nest. The ash began to settle around my boots, sticking lightly to my clothes. I must have looked like a ghost, pale and staring. Silence pervaded the air, broken only by an occasional shout from the other Vikings. "Hiccup?" A tear traced a path down my face. "Hiccup, please don't leave me!

Hiccup!" But no one answered. In the distance, I heard Stoick shouting as well, but then his yells ceased.

\_Is that good or bad?\_

I saw everyone gathering around something I could not see. I ran over to the crowd, tripping in my haste. I angrily fought back desperate tears as I pushed through. No one bothered to stop me.

Finally, I reached the front. I couldn't see Hiccup anywhere. Stoick knelt on the ground, in front ofâ€|Toothless. The world darkened into a single point, the point where Toothless lay motionless with an empty saddle on his back. Where there should have been a scrawny, clumsy, brave, hopeful young boy was a black hole in my heart. I couldn't have been more surprisedâ€|or hurtâ€|if someone had stabbed me in the gut.

\_Hiccup is dead.\_

Toothless raised his head slowly, blinking his emerald eyes at us. He seemed puzzled by our reactions, the Vikings mourning the loss of his best friend. And he didn't even know. I almost wished that Toothless was gone, too, to the heaven both of them had achieved. At least they would be together.

"I'm so sorry," Stoick said, looking at Toothless with a bowed head. I could feel his pain, his terrible pain at losing his only son.

Toothless' eyes lit up a bit as he studied Stoick. I saw his nostrils flare. Then Toothless rolled to the side, lifted his wings, and exposed a prone figure in his embrace.

I dared not hope for it. But I had no doubt of it when Stoick shouted, "He's alive!"

\_Hiccup is alive. \_I could hardly believe it. After all of that fire, all of that danger that he put himself in for us, he was still unharmed. I laughed, covering my mouth and smiling so widely my face must've looked ridiculous. But I didn't care. \_Hiccup is alive!\_

I saw Stoick place a large hand on Toothless' head. "Thank you for saving my son."

Toothless dropped his head, looking content. I was the first of the crowd to run up to Hiccup, to see the one who saved my life. But when I saw his feet, I recoiled. Where Hiccup's left foot should have been was a charred swath of fabric. Hiccup lost a foot.

"Oh, Hiccup," I said, putting a hand on his blackened, scraped face. Another tear fell, revealing a dot of pale skin as it washed the ash from his face. Then Gobber pulled me gently away, towards the dragons that waited to take us home. I almost fought him, but then I decided that it would do no good for anyone. So I settled for watching him from afar as the Nadder took me home.

\_Hiccup is alive.\_

\* \* \*

><p>"Please?"<p>

"\_No, \_Astrid. The boy's just lost a foot, for Thor's sake!"

"Gobber, please! I have to see him! You let \_Toothless\_ in."

"Astrid," he said, exasperated, "now that's something entirely different." And no matter how much I begged him, he would not give in.

Frustrated, I returned to the gang waiting around the corner. "Well?" Fishlegs asked eagerly. "Is he OK?"

"Gobber won't let me in." I sat myself down on the steps of the empty house. Fishlegs looked downtrodden and glanced at the others. "You know," Tuffnut said mischievously, "we could sneak in a window andâ€"

"I'Dâ€!" I sighed and bit back a retort born of worrying to the point of insanity. "I'd rather not get in trouble right now." Leave it to Tuffnut to figure out how to break into the Chief's house. His fingers were stickier than Gronckle spit.

Snotlout nodded without saying anything. We watched Stoick and the other village leaders put together the new dragon society. Thank goodness he had seen sense at the last second.

"Snotlout! Fishlegs!" I looked up from my hands. Gobber stood over us. "And, you know, the rest of you lot. Would you be willing to teach us how to ride dragons?" He clasped his hands behind his back and rocked back and forth, looking a little embarrassed after the scene in the kill ring.

Everyone was enthusiastic, but I bit my lip. Being around dragons would just bring back memories that I was trying to stifle right now. "Iâ€|"

Ruffnut patted me on the back. "We'll catch up with you," she said. I was surprised by her understanding. But she was right. I needed Hiccup right now. They left, and I tucked my arms around my legs and worried some more. Was he awake yet? Or was he on his deathbed? Surely no one would be so calm if he was dying.

"Look! It's Hiccup!" I whipped my head around and saw Hiccup himself, standing in awe of the new order before him. I automatically looked down at Hiccup's missing foot. Gobber had made him a replacement foot, a spring-loaded prosthetic that he was obviously still getting used to. He got crowded by Vikings, but not before I could slip between them and sock him on the arm. Hard.

"That's for scaring me," I said, half-angry and half-amused. Hiccup looked indignant. "What, is it always going to be this way? Causeâ€" "

He stuttered to a halt as I grabbed the front of his tunic and kissed him. The Vikings around me wolf-whistled, but I ignored them.

Hiccup looked dazed. "â€"cause I could get used to it," he said,

shrugging.

I smiled and shook my head. Same old Hiccup.

Gobber stepped up and handed Hiccup a large, red, folded-up something made out of cloth. I realized that it was a tail for Toothless, based on Hiccup's own designs.

"Welcome home," he said. Hiccup grinned.

"Night Fury!" someone cried from behind us. I turned to see Toothless leaping on the shoulders of Vikings, attempting to get to Hiccup.

"Get down!" another shouted. I laughed as I recognized the alarm for a Night Fury attack. Hiccup laughed with me as Toothless showed his most wide, innocent eyes at us.

Hiccup attached the new tail to Toothless' saddle. Gobber had created a new stirrup that hooked up to Hiccup's prosthetic. I realized that it was the same side as Toothless' missing tail fin. Ironic. But they were together again, and that was all that mattered. I mounted the Nadder, ready to fly once more, and Hiccup and I took off. Dragons whirled around us, a new life ready to start, and the gang joined us. Hiccup yelled, Toothless roared, and together they flew off into a new horizon.

\*\*Not the end of the movie, but I like it. I did my Hiccup POV story much better...since I could put "The people that grow here are even more so" and whatnot. But that's just me. What about you? Enjoy the ride with Astrid? Well, I can't tell from here! Go down there and tell me!\*\*

End  
file.